

**Corporation for National and Community Service**

**2010 Social Innovation Fund**

**New Profit Inc.**

**Reviewer Comments – Phase 2**

## SOCIAL INNOVATION FUND 2010 EVALUATION CONSENSUS FORM

*Instructions throughout this form are indicated in red.*

**Before you begin, please fill out the Applicant Name and Application ID# in the above header.**

This Evaluation Consensus Form (ECF) is where each panel records its consensus assessment of an application. The completion of this form may be led by any panelist; that individual will be designated the Lead Reviewer (LR). All Reviewers are expected to serve as the LR on at least two applications. **The evaluation consensus assessment should be based on the panel's examination of only the subcategories highlighted in red in the chart below, *not* the full application. In addition, Evaluation Reviewers should only assess how well applicants responded to the *specific evidence-based criteria* within the subcategories highlighted in yellow in this form.**

Category	Percentage	Subcategories
Program Design	45%	A. Goals and Objectives B. Use of Evidence C. Community Resources D. Description of Activities i. Subgranting ii. Technical Assistance and Support
Organizational Capacity	35%	A. Ability to Provide Program Oversight B. Ability to Provide Fiscal Oversight
Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy	20%	A. Budget and Program Design B. Match Sources

Panels will utilize Panel Consensus Calls to discuss each application and come to agreement on the content of the Narrative Assessment for each category, the Rating for each category, the Overall Appraisal Statement and the Band in which the application will be placed. When completing this form, the LR should rely on four primary documents: 1) the application being reviewed; 2) the SIF Review Notes page from each panelist; 3) the SIF Notice of Federal Funds Availability (NOFA); 4) the Consensus Rubric at the end of this form.

**Please complete the following steps:**

1. For each of the 3 categories the LR should:
  - a. **Write a 3–5 sentence Narrative Assessment** reflecting the panel's assessment of the quality of the response in the category being assessed; it is important that this narrative include brief summary information, but more importantly, the panel's evaluation of the application's quality.
  - b. **List the application's significant strengths and weaknesses and annotate each.** Each significant strength or weakness **must** be supported by **at least one** of the Eligibility or Application Review Criteria that were in the SIF NOFA. (criteria are included in this form)
  - c. **Taking into consideration** both the Narrative Assessment and the listed strengths and weaknesses, **select a category Rating** by checking the appropriate box.
2. **Complete the Overall Appraisal section.** In this section, you will:
  - a. Provide an Overall Appraisal Statement; and
  - b. Select a Consensus Band that represents the quality of the application as a whole. The Bands are described in the Overall Appraisal section at the end of this form.

## **PROGRAM DESIGN (45%)**

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The **Social Innovation Fund Notice of Funding Availability (NOFA)** states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Program Design.

### **A. GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

*The Corporation asks applicants to use a thematic approach in describing their proposed investments in community organizations. As established in the Act, there are two basic operational models of SIF intermediaries. The first is a SIF that will operate in a single geographic location, and address one or more priority issues within that location. This model is referred to as a "geographically-based SIF." The second model is a SIF that will address a single priority issue area in multiple geographic locations. This model is referred to as an "issue-based SIF." The Corporation will assess whether the application properly proposes goals and objectives as either a geographically-based or an issue-based SIF.*

#### **i. Geographically-Based SIF**

*The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area(s) within the specific local geographic area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to those issue areas that the applicant will seek to improve.*

#### **ii. Issue-Based SIF**

*The application must provide 1) statistics on the needs related to the issue area within the geographic areas likely to be served, including statistics demonstrating that those geographic areas have a high need in the priority issue area, and 2) information on the specific measurable outcomes related to the priority issue area that the applicant will seek to improve.*

### **B. USE OF EVIDENCE**

- i.** *Applicants must include in their application information describing their track record of using rigorous evidence, data, and evaluation tools to:*
- *Select and invest in subgrantees;*
  - *Support and monitor the replication and expansion of subgrantees; and*
  - *Achieve measurable outcomes.*

### **D. DESCRIPTION OF ACTIVITIES**

#### **i. Subgranting**

- a.** *Applicants must describe the process by which they will competitively select their nonprofit community organization subgrantees, and, if applicable, the process by which they have pre-selected some subgrantees. Specifically, applicants must describe how their competitive subgrant selection process will ensure a portfolio of subgrantees that are innovative nonprofit community organizations serving low-income communities and that possess:*

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.

Application ID#: 10si114710

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- *A commitment to and track record of using data and evaluation for performance and program improvement;*
  - *Evidence of effectiveness, including a demonstrated track record of achieving specific measurable outcomes related to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary;*
  - *Strong potential for replication or expansion;*
  - *A well-defined plan for achieving specific measurable outcomes connected to the measurable outcomes for the intermediary, evaluation of program effectiveness, performance improvement, and replication or expansion; and*

ii. **Technical Assistance and Support**

- a. *Applicants must include in their application information describing how they will provide technical assistance and support (other than financial support) that will increase the ability of subgrantees to achieve their measurable outcomes, including replication or expansion. Replication or expansion may happen in various ways (including, for example, creating new sites or affiliating with another program to replicate an intervention) and in multiple contexts (including, for example, serving more people in a current geography or growing to new geographies).*

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**Provide a panel assessment of the application's PROGRAM DESIGN as follows:**

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

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**Panel Narrative Assessment**

This application is for an issue-based SIF focusing on improving high school and college outcomes in large urban areas, which have not yet been determined. \$10M is requested to support work with 6-8 subgrantees, of which College Summit, Year Up, and iMentor have been pre-selected. They present a strong plan for selecting additional subgrantees. The applicant also demonstrates a strong track record in and commitment to using evidence. There are weaknesses in that technical assistance supports do not appear to incorporate strong experts on rigorous evaluation.

**Significant Strengths**

The applicant provides compelling rates of high school dropout and disconnected youth in large urban cities. The applicant has not selected geographic regions to work in, but provides examples of graduation rates in the largest school districts in Chicago, Denver, Miami, and New York as ranging from 51 to 59%. The rates of disconnected youth in these cities range from 17 to 19%. (*Program Design, A.ii.*)

They propose clear measurable outcomes focusing on high school and college: increases in high school graduation and GED attainment; college enrollment; college credit accumulation acceptance; and living wage employment. (*Program Design, A.ii.*)

The applicant has significant experience supporting nonprofits in expanding their programs, and provides concrete examples of how they used evidence in that work. (*Program Design, D.i.a.*)

- They cite specific examples of their past use of research to guide program improvement (i.e., using impact findings from an RCT of the BELL summer program in decisions to focus on BELL's summer work; improving

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.

Application ID#: 10si114710

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Peer Health Exchange's tracking of participants' outcomes over time and in relation to national data; studying variation across Project HEALTH sites and using findings to improve low-performing sites). p. 11-13.

- It is reassuring that they also provide an example of a case in which evidence was not positive and of how they used that evidence to improve the nonprofit. On p. 26, they discuss the lack of program fidelity among Citizen Schools' affiliates, and how they used evidence from interviews, benchmarking, and literature review to change Citizen Schools' expansion model. This example of a negative case suggests a genuine commitment to using research, whether positive or negative.

They describe a strong plan for selecting subgrantees based on five sets of criteria based on the social entrepreneur, the organization's direct impact, systemic impact, organizational capacity, and the fit and added value of NPI. They have covered all the important bases here. From the perspective of using evidence, it would have been useful to hear more about the evidence they review to make their decisions and how they analyze that evidence. (*Program Design, D.i.a.*)

They clearly state their aim to "help organizations move from preliminary evidence to moderate and strong evidence over the course of the grant." They do not tell us, though, whether and how they collect data to monitor this progress. For example, what percentage of their grantees makes this progress? (*Program Design, D.i.a.*)

### Significant Weaknesses

The technical assistance generally appears strong, but it does not include assistance from people with proven expertise in rigorous research designs for evaluating program impacts. Robin Hood does not appear to have substantial experience designing or implementing strong experimental studies. (*Program Design, D.ii.a.*)

Select a Rating for PROGRAM DESIGN (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☒ Excellent

☐ Strong

☐ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

## ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (35%)

The **Social Innovation Fund NOFA** states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Organizational Capacity.

### A. ABILITY TO PROVIDE PROGRAM OVERSIGHT

*In evaluating your organization's ability to provide program oversight, the Corporation will consider:*

- The extent to which your organization has a sound structure including:*
  - The ability to provide sound programmatic oversight, including:*
    - Experience with and capacity for evaluation; and*
    - Experience with and capacity for supporting replication or expansion.*
  - A well-designed plan and systems for organizational (as opposed to subgrantee) self-assessment and continuous improvement*

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.

Application ID#: 10si114710

ii. *Whether your organization has a sound record of accomplishment, including the extent to which you:*

- *Have a track record of supporting organizations that demonstrate evidence of impact;*

**Provide a panel assessment of the application's ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY as follows:**

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

### **Panel Narrative Assessment**

While NPI staff have experience using data and tracking outcomes over time, they appear to have less experience and capacity designing and using findings from experimental or strong quasi-experimental evaluations.

### **Significant Strengths**

The applicant appears to have experience with using data and tracking outcomes over time. On page 8, they describe developing and tracking data on grantees' program impacts, revenue growth, and number of beneficiaries served. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

Lisbeth Schorr and Anne Kubisch have signed on as evaluation advisors. Both have strong reputations in evaluation and their involvement is a potential strength, but it is unclear what they will do nor the intensity of their involvement. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

They have participated in the Center for Effective Philanthropy's Grantee Perception Report. This is a good thing in so far as it provides a point of comparison for evaluating their work (in this case, compared with that other grantmakers), but they do not say how often they participated, what their scores were, and whether their scores are published. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

### **Significant Weaknesses**

Robin Hood will lead design of "third-party research to improve program effectiveness" and will develop "return on investment tools" based on its prior work. The application does not demonstrate that Robin Hood has the requisite expertise or a track record for designing rigorous impact studies or cost-benefit analyses. The paper cited on "measuring success" raised concerns. It is published by Robin Hood. The methods and paper do not appear to have been subjected to review by other researchers. The description of methods in the paper is vague. The section on standards of evidence also raised concerns. In order to obtain good estimates of the costs and benefits of a program, you need to know the impact of the program and that requires a strong counterfactual for what would have occurred in the absence of the program. This was not convincingly addressed in the paper and methods espoused. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

In some places, the applicant distinguishes between evidence of different rigor, such as when they discuss preliminary, moderate, and strong evidence for subgrantees' work. But in other parts of the application, they do not differentiate what can be concluded from different types of studies that use differing research designs. For example, the proposal interprets findings from very different studies (i.e., longitudinal studies tracking program outcomes over time, experiments, and small-scale correlational studies) in similar ways without distinguishing how different research designs and methods are suited for answering different types of research questions (p. 12-13, 21). Some capacity-building on this might be useful, so that NPI and subgrantees can demand studies that provide strong evidence that meets their needs, and can accurately interpret and use that evidence in their decision-making. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.  
Application ID#: 10si114710

The applicant does not provide a detailed way of assessing its own contribution to grantees' work. For example, the applicant says that they have been "instrumental in [prior grantees] success," but strong evidence was not provided on what they did or provided that was instrumental. How did their contributions change what would have otherwise occurred without their support? Perhaps the applicants' support helped organizations achieve stronger outcomes, or perhaps the applicant is good at picking winners that would succeed with or without their support. It would be useful to hear from the applicant about the specific supports they provided that they believe made a difference and for them to collect data to test whether they are right. NPI plans to solicit grantee feedback for self-assessment and improvement, and says it will conduct a "small-scale review" during year one. It is not clear what that review will consist of, but it would be useful to collect strong data on various aspects of their support to subgrantees and connect that data with indicators of subgrantees' progress. This would help them identify which aspects of their work seem to be working well vis-à-vis subgrantees, which aspects do not seem to be working well, and why. (*Organizational Capacity, A.i.*)

Another weakness is that they do not provide details on their track record for success in moving organizations towards stronger evidence. *Examples* of success are cited, as above, but it is not clear how representative those cases are and how often New Profit succeeds in moving organizations toward stronger evidence. (*Organizational Capacity, A.ii.*)

Select a Rating for ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☐ Excellent

☐ Strong

☒ Satisfactory

☐ Weak/Non-responsive

## **COST EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY (20%)**

The **Social Innovation Fund NOFA** states that the following will be considered when reviewing an applicant's Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy.

### **A. BUDGET AND PROGRAM DESIGN**

*In evaluating the cost effectiveness and budget adequacy of your proposed program, the Corporation will consider:*

- i. *Whether your program is cost-effective*
- ii. *Whether your budget is adequate to support your program design.*

**Provide a panel assessment of the application's COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY as follows:**

- **Write a brief Narrative Assessment;**
- **List the Significant Strengths and Weaknesses (annotate your comments by referencing the applicable Eligibility or Application Review Criteria); and**
- **Select a Rating for this section.**

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.  
Application ID#: 10sj114710

### Panel Narrative Assessment

It is not clear that the \$177K budgeted for a full-time research director is justified. Of course, it is difficult to say this with any certainty without knowing what the research director would do. Our best guess from reading the application is that the research director would aid in the design of evaluations and a third-party assessment of NPI, but we are doubtful that that would entail a full-time position.

### Significant Strengths

None noted.

### Significant Weaknesses

\$282K is requested for program evaluation. Of this, \$177K is budgeted to support a full-time director of research and evaluation. It is not clear what this research director will do, given that Michael Weinstein is described as "leading" the design of evaluations (though he will provide services free of charge) and third-parties will conduct the evaluations. Even if the research director were to have primary responsibility overseeing evaluation designs, it is not clear that this would constitute full-time work. \$100K is dedicated to portfolio-level case studies. This may or may not be a good use of money. It is hard to judge because little information is provided about the goals, design, and conduct of that work. \$15K is budgeted for third-party assessment of NPI. That's a small budget for doing a high-quality, useful assessment of the quality of the intermediary's work. (Cost, A.i.)

**Select a Rating for COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND BUDGET ADEQUACY** (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

☐ Excellent

☐ Strong

☐ Satisfactory

☒ Weak/Non-responsive

## OVERALL APPRAISAL

### I. Provide a 3 - 5 sentence Overall Appraisal Statement of the application taking into consideration:

- The Narrative Assessments, significant strengths and weaknesses, and Ratings from each category; and
- The weighting of each category (Program Design (45%), Organizational Capacity (35%), Cost-Effectiveness and Budget Adequacy (20%) ).

Overall this is a strong, well-conceived application. The applicant's pre-existing aims, their strong granting criteria, and their commitment to using evidence are aligned well with the SIF. There are some organizational capacity issues here that might be remedied with finding partner with experience designing and implementing

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.  
Application ID#: 10si114710

rigorous evaluation studies, and interpreting the findings from them. The work would also be strengthened by greater attention to collecting data on the quality of their work with grantees (as opposed to data on the quality of grantees' work).

**II. Select one Band for this application** (double-click in the applicable box and select "checked")

**Ensure that your selection is supported by your panel's Narrative Assessments, significant strengths and weaknesses, Ratings, and Overall Appraisal Statement. Take into consideration the weighting of each category.**

- ☐ **Band I (Excellent):** A comprehensive and thorough application of excellent merit with very significant strengths and no/minimal significant weaknesses.
- ☒ **Band II (Strong):** An application that demonstrates overall competence and is worthy of support, where the value of the significant strengths outweigh the identified weaknesses.
- ☐ **Band III (Satisfactory):** An application with potential, where strengths and weaknesses are approximately equal. However, some fundamental weaknesses have been identified.
- ☐ **Band IV (Weak/Non-Responsive):** An application with very significant weaknesses and no/minimal significant strengths that have been identified. This option may also include an application that is non-responsive to the published criteria.

## CONSENSUS RUBRIC

Please use this Consensus Rubric as guidance when selecting your Ratings or Bands.

**BAND I (Excellent)** — *A BAND I rating reflects that the application is compelling, consistently excellent in quality, and addresses all requirements; thereby showing the highest potential for success.*

The **Excellent** application consistently:

- ✓ Goes beyond what was requested, showing that the applicant has anticipated issues that may arise.
- ✓ Provides a thorough, detailed response to all of the information requested.

Applicant Name: New Profit, Inc.  
Application ID#: 10si114710

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- ✓ Provides a clear and highly compelling description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
  - ✓ Provides clear evidence to support all objectives of this section (no assumptions are made).
  - ✓ Supports ideas and objectives with comprehensive plans explaining and connecting ideas to objectives.

**BAND II (Strong)** — *A BAND II rating reflects that the application is solid, good-quality, and has great potential for success.*

The **Strong** application:

- ✓ Provides a response to all of the information requested.
- ✓ Provides a realistic description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Explains most assumptions and reasons.
- ✓ Supports ideas with comprehensive plans, examples, or outlines.

**BAND III (Satisfactory)** — *A BAND III rating reflects that the application generally meets requirements for a reasonable chance of success, but is neither especially strong nor especially weak.*

The **Satisfactory** application:

- ✓ Covers most of the information requested, with a few exceptions.
- ✓ Is sometimes unclear how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Makes some assumptions and leaves some reasons unexplained.
- ✓ Supports individual ideas with plans, examples, or outline.

**BAND IV (Weak/Non-responsive)** — *A weak/non-responsive rating reflects that the application is below standard especially in ability, skill, or quality; indicating that this application will most likely not succeed as described or is not responsive to the application requirements.*

The **Weak/Non-responsive** application:

- ✓ Does not provide one or more key pieces of requested information.
- ✓ Gives an unclear description of how the proposed activities will achieve the anticipated results.
- ✓ Gives many unsupported assumptions and reasons with little or no connection to objectives.
- ✓ Tends to "parrot" back the question, rather than answer and explain it
- ✓ Makes many assumptions and many reasons are not defined.
- ✓ Did not connect the activities to the anticipated results.
- ✓ Does not address or respond to the requirements/conditions of the NOFA.
- ✓ Proposes activities that are not consistent with the NOFA and application instructions.